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## THE PUFF-POETS.

POETRY, from the days of Homer, Æschylus, and Pindar, down to the poetical dawn of Rowland, Day and Martin, and Mechi, consisted of three classes; namely, of the epic, the dramatic, and the lyric. But, since the advent of the last-named geniuses, a new department of the divine art has sprung up; a style which, budding in the gardens of Parnassus, blows in the columns of the newspapers.\* This is *puff-poetry*.

A foreigner perusing the English journals would be justified in agreeing with Napoleon, when he called us a nation of shopkeepers. But we are something more; we are also a nation of poets. Intense and irrepressible must that love of poetry appear to strangers' eyes, which bursts forth on such themes as coats, coffee, candles (moulds and dips), razors, macassar oil, fish, antibilious pills, snuff, sauce, and scented soap. But there is another article of too high importance to be ignobly classed in a mere list; an article which can never be mentioned without a preliminary flourish; we mean that "inestimable composition" which "keeps in all climates, and will not soil the finest linen;" that exquisite fluid which has proved as inspiring to certain modern poets as the waters of Hippocrene did to the bards of old! Need we name *Blacking*!

There is an unfounded complaint afloat amongst authors, that poetry is not at present appreciated; that facts and solid knowledge are fast superseding fiction; that the upward flights of genius are disregarded for the onward course of the steam-engine and the sciences; that, in short, Pegasus is on his last legs, in spite of his wings. One glance at a newspaper ought, however, to silence so unjust a complaint; for the advertising columns may be looked upon as forming a national monument of poetical labour. The truth is, the authors who utter such lamenta, not having hit upon the right department of their art, have consequently attracted no attention, and are envious of the successes of their advertisement-inspired brethren. They have, unhappily, wasted their time and their rhyme upon epics, tragedies, and odes; so many of which are "born to blush unseen." Whereas, would they but turn the current of their imagination into a steady stream of puffing, their lucubrations would be rewarded with extensive publicity, and, as we are informed, about a guinea per six stanzas! This advice may be—and by poets of the higher and more disinterested order, doubtless will be—repudiated in an outburst of grandiloquent cant about desecration of genius, base prostitution of the muses—and all that. It behoves us, therefore, to soothe their offended dignity. We can prove that their high calling is nowise degraded by being exercised upon the subjects, and in the manner, we have described. The true poet raises and dignifies his theme, whatever it may be; like the wand of the eastern magician, all he touches turns to gold. It is he who sublimates the subject, and not the subject which degrades him. Has not Burns immortalised the toothache? But we will take a practical example—say *blacking*—a bottle of *blacking*. If that elegant object be capable of exciting "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (which we shall presently show has been the case), why should those feelings not have vent? Is there so vast a dissimilarity between a bottle of *blacking* and a bottle of wine? Are the odes of Anacreon, Moore, and others, to "jolly full bottles," to monopolise every ray of immortality, merely because they (the bottles) contained wine? Is no

honour to be gained by the bard who apostrophises the vessel that is brimfull of *blacking*? Can it be of consequence whether the poet's muse derive her inspiration from port, or from polish? Does it so much matter which kind of "black-strap" he is called upon to poetise? We answer, it cannot. On the contrary, the *blacking* poet has rather the advantage. Wine was never a moral subject, and now, what is far worse, it is a worn-out one. But *blacking*, considering how much it innocently enhances every man's personal appearance, is a moral theme, and, the ancients having known nothing about it, it is possible to treat it without risk of knocking one's head against Horace and Virgil.

We must candidly admit, however, that, to show the high-souled poet he does not stoop in expending his talents on puffing, we have taken an extreme case; we have instanced a theme which is, of all others, the most inspiring; for what Beauty is to lyrical, so is *Blacking* to puff, poetry. But the other subjects we have named are capable, as the daily press constantly shows, of being eloquently ennobled by poetical imagery. It would seem, indeed, that there is no article made in this manufacturing and commercial country, "to sell" which has not, at some period or other, excited, or seemed to excite, "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." The following stanzas on winter-coats—introduced by a fervent apostrophe on the festive season at which it was written—is selected from a copious anthology of puffs which we have cut from the newspapers:—

### CHRISTMAS.

"Time—time flies fast, it's ever on the wing;  
Summer's gone by, of winter now we sing.  
The season comes when round the Yule-block fire  
Children collect to glad the happy sire.  
'Blessed is the man who has his garner stored'  
With 'happy boys,' to grace his Christmas board—  
With joy elate he hears the schoolboy's law  
Of kite, bowl, cricket, leap-frog, top, and taw.  
To hide their pleasure, men will scratch their head—  
Talk of the expense of schooling, clothes, and bread:  
One boy in health costs less, you'll all declare,  
For a year entire than month in doctor's care.  
Beware of coughs, mind both your boys and self,  
Guard all 'gainst drafts, 'twill save your lungs and pelf.  
Winter is come, as Cæsar declared the Ides,  
But I, like Brutus, say it's not passed—provide  
From M—'s store a Tag—York wrapper—Chesterfield,  
That from cold or storm the body safe will shield.  
Of boys' clothes, too, they have an ample store;  
Year after year they save you more and more.  
Then hie at once, whate'er your station ranks,  
And for my advice I'm safe to have your thanks."

Let not the poet of high pretensions despise the lowest subject after this! Here he will perceive that even upon coats and Christmas a miniature epic can be produced. The bard plunges into the middle of things at once. He tells you—apropos of coats—that Time flies fast; that though he writes on the 25th of December, the "summer's gone by." The action now commences. The scenery (a pleasing interior) is set around "the Yule-block fire." The conversation of the family circle—so animated and natural—after ranging through a variety of topics, enters upon the grand aim, end, and purpose of the poem, which is artfully, nay, insidiously introduced. Children, reasons the practical philosopher—"scratching his head"—are expensive little individuals. True; but not so very costly if kept comfortably clothed; for is it not better to pay the tailor than the doctor? Unanswerable logic! Here is gracefully adjoined that allusion to classical history which the higher schools of epic imperiously demand; and from Julius Cæsar and Brutus we are hurried on to top-coats. In one line, the horrors of a winter, if encountered without

York wrappers, are fearfully portrayed; in another, a skilful antithesis shows us the positive delights of "cold and storm" with Tags, York wrappers, or Chesterfields. In the peroration—or, more correctly, the epode, or grand wind-up—the whole subject-matter is cleverly recapitulated. Nothing obscure hangs over the meaning; which is, that at M—'s store it is possible to procure exterior antidotes to "cold and storm" of every description, from skeleton jackets to upper Benjamins, on extremely reasonable terms.

The envy of others is, it would seem, the unfailing inheritance of genius. Pope had his Curle, Byron his Scotch reviewers; and we perceive that the poet but now quoted was not long without a rival. Another knight of the shears, alarmed, doubtless, by the increased trade which his neighbour obtained from this advertisement, instantly sought a laureate of his own. And here we may be allowed to digress for one moment, to point out the benefits which this kind of competition is destined to confer on that finest of fine arts, the "Ars poetica." The rhymatical-advertisement system is gaining ground so fast, that we do not despair of soon seeing poetry raised to the privilege of being ranked as a regular branch of retail trade. The young shopkeeper, therefore, who would commence business with any prospect of success, will have to provide himself with capital, stock-in-trade, patronage, and—a poet.

But to return to the rival tailor. Fired by the rapid disappearance of monkey-dresses and York wrappers from his neighbour's windows, he determined not to be outdone. How he succeeded in his choice of a bard, the following ode will show:—

### MEMORY.

"Essential gift, fair garden of the mind,  
Where all her treasures faithful culture find:  
The rich soil, once stored, hoards up learning's treasure,  
Crop after crop it yields through life with pleasure.  
The pleasing anecdote—the once read book—  
At will t'amuse, are from its sources took.  
Blessed with this gift, old age is vigorous still;  
His tales to hear, the young obey his will—  
His youthful gambols with precision tell—  
Horace—Juvenal—classics all remembered well.  
Store well your mind with maxims good in time;  
It matters not whether stored in prose or rhyme.  
Against winter's colds make sure yourself defend.  
For this wise purpose let — be your friend.  
Be wise, and prove it. Who for ten-and-six  
Would chance for life a cold on self to fix?  
The cheapest best protector in their store you'll find,  
Warranted to shield from every cutting wind  
The peer, youth, peasant, landman—all—and sailors—  
Adapted to every grade and rank you'll find—prince of tailors.  
And whether for clothes ready made, or those bespoke to measure,  
To meet your will in every way is still their greatest pleasure.

List of prices:—Ready-made department: winter coats from 9s.; Taglioni's, 12s.; Chesterfields, lined, velvet trimmed, 13s.; Arabs and Felton, velvet collars, 14s."

Though it is impossible not to be struck with the deeply metaphysical turn of this lyric—the graceful manner in which the human mind, the crops, juvenile gambols, romantic fiction, Horace, Juvenal, and the winter's cold, are mixed up with peers, youth, peasants, landmen, in short, everybody, and sailors besides; yet it is that essential figure of rhetoric, bathos which, as exhibited in the conclusion, demands our highest admiration. What sublime examples do we here find of "the art of sinking in poetry!" From Horace to "ten-and-six" is indeed a heavy declension; but when we are made acquainted with the fiscal arrangements of the "ready-made department," the mind, made to descend from figures of speech to arithmetical numerals, is plunged into a "lower than the lowest deep," by the "list of prices."

\* Wordsworth's definition of poetry. See preface to his "Lyrical Ballads."

Our next puff-poet takes snuff—for his subject:

"Great was the power that did to man impart  
Creative genius and inventive art;  
The second prize is, doubtless, *G—*, thine!  
Wise was thine head, and great was thy design!  
Our precious sight, from danger now set free,  
Wives, widows, fathers, praise sing to thee.  
E. R., 19 Ball Street, Marylebone."

The merit of this stanza is the artistical manner in which it is introduced. The stipendiary poet of the snuff-shop feels that, were he to write in his own person, the disinterestedness of his praise would be suspected. For this reason, he delivers his sentiments in the character of a lady-lyrist—a Sappho who takes snuff, and resides at number 19 Ball Street, Marylebone. He would fain have you believe that the fancied blue-stocking of Ball Street, overcomes by the efficacy of the snuff in curing sore eyes, had inconspicuously found vent for her gratitude in song. Imagine the poetical Miss E. R. with her cured eyes "in a fine frenzy rolling," pouring out her soul in verse to him who enabled her orbs to roll! The acute reader, but no other, will see the mystic allusion here, and own that this is truly the art which conceals art.

We glide, by a natural connexion of subject, from the nose to the chin. Shaving and poetry have for ages been closely allied. Emollient stanzas on soap, keen epigrams on razors, and wit sharpened upon "magic strops," daily adorn the columns of the papers. Here is a sample taken at random:—

"Most people complain that shaving's a bore,  
Each day's painful scrape only chafes the old sore;  
Choose the cutler who stands at the head of his trade;  
Half the battle depends on a well-tempered blade."

The poet will not, you perceive, insult the fame of his patron by mentioning names. He knows that when we say "the duke," the hero of Waterloo is the person unequivocally understood. "The cutler," therefore, is quite enough. He scorns to enter into particulars. As Don Quixote declared that there was only one beauty in Spain, and she Donna Dulciana del Toboso, so does our puffer pronounce that in the whole civilised—that is to say, in the whole shaving—world, there is but one cutler worthy to be called a cutler, and he is —; but "not to know him, argues yourself unknown."

The following specimens will show the danger of shopkeepers meddling with what they do not understand. A London fishmonger, who is continually advertising his stock and its prices in flowing numbers, is manifestly his own poet. Like most amateurs, he vainly attempts what the authors of "Christmas" and "Memory" achieve. He fails; and—while there are so many men of genius about town with boundless imaginations and contracted means—he deserves to fail. It is clear that "the gods have not made him poetical;" he was meant for a fishmonger, and nothing more. His muse hobbles like an elderly lady with corns; for example—

"If wanting sole, or eels, or skate, to-day,  
A swiftness price you must not decidedly pay.  
Salmon is dear; of cod there is not any;  
And as for whiting, I tell you candidly, it is not worth a penny."

Another amateur, unable to boast, like the lady in the play—

"We keeps a poet,"

is—we, of the country of Burns, blush to own—an Edinburgh citizen who sells coffee. The poem is introduced by a prose essay on the "war in China," and its effect upon the markets; a rapid glance is then taken at Afghanistan, whilst a passing tribute to the merits of General Sale leads up to a pretty allusion to the colonial markets and the fall in tea, which is wittily declared to be quite as signal as the fall of Cabul. The quatrain is then introduced:—

"If people would but write their amale true,  
'Tis there they should have said, that it was I  
Who, like an eagle in a dovecot,  
Fluttered their 'prices' in Edinburgh."

This unblushing "forced loan" (we will not use a harsher term) from Coriolanus, is too manifest to escape detection. Our fellow-townsmen's plagiarism is really worse than the London fishmonger's originality; for our readers will hardly credit his boldness, when we say, that his name is signed to the lines, as if he intended to rob the real author of his laurels. This piece of injustice to William Shakespeare exhibits a poetical license not quite correct in one whose license limits him to the sale of groceries.

But our readers are doubtless exhausted with the sublime style of advertisement-writing; they are probably yearning for some examples of the light literature of the puff-poets. We can indulge them. As the poet, when at a loss for a simile, seldom invokes the moon or the stars in vain, so do we turn to the never-exhausted subject of blacking; for, from the copious treasury it supplies, any style may be obtained. The ensuing is neat, epigrammatic, and not altogether unworthy of the Latin poet Martial.

#### SUBSTANCE AND SHADOW.

"Lord B— laid a bet on two game-cocks, that they,  
When pitted, would turn from each other away;  
So next day in boots of residency grand,  
My Warren's famed jet, No. 30 the Strand,  
He came; when, relinquishing grosser pursuits,  
The cocks fiercely flew at the mirror-like boots,  
And each on his shadow made desperate attack,  
Nor could they again to the scotch be brought back;  
Thus triumph'd Lord B— Warren's blacking the cause  
Of victory—while hail'd with unbounded applause."

The subjects of blacking and civilisation were never so ingeniously combined, seldom so powerfully advocated, as in

#### THE TRIUMPH OF MERIT.

"When first from the mart, No. 30 the Strand,  
The jet emanated to polish each land,  
There sprang up of impotent rivals a host—  
But where are they now? In obscurity lost!  
The blacking of Warren, while spreading its name,  
And gaining distinguished and permanent fame;  
Through intrinsic worth, for its splendour unfur'd,  
Pervades now the whole of the civilised world!"

Having given an idea of the works of the great men who have devoted their talents to puff-poetry, our readers will doubtless be desirous to know something of the individuals themselves. This is a pardonable curiosity. The private manners and eccentricities of genius have ever proved a fruitful theme for the pen of the biographer, and for the speculation of the public. We regret, however, that our materials are by no means so ample as we could wish. But their defective quantity is compensated by the preciousness of their quality. It is our happy privilege to possess an original autograph letter from an author of this class. It is addressed to the secretary of an amateur musical association.

"Sir—Having understood that the committee for conducting the — subscription concerts intend to avail themselves of the services of my friend Mr. M—, as composer of music for their concerts, it has been suggested to me by my influential friends, that they might also have occasion for my assistance in writing or adapting words for his compositions.

Having been for some time employed in writing for the establishment of my friend Mr — of the —, London, many of my works are well-known to the public through the medium of the daily press; and though the subject on which my pen has been principally employed is not calculated to do much justice to the poetic talent, I may venture to observe, that it has required some fertility of invention to clothe it with variety.

I have also had some practice in altering poetry, so as to preserve the rhymes, while the sense is completely changed; a talent which I am informed is extremely valuable in adapting new words to old music, as the effect of the music depends more upon the sound of the rhymes than upon the meaning of the words.

Should the committee feel disposed to employ me in the above capacity, I shall take the liberty of submitting to them specimens of my poetry; or, if they prefer it, I will write a poem upon any subject they may do me the honour to propose.

My terms will be found reasonable; and, if the rhymes are supplied to me, I make a liberal reduction. I have the honour to be, your humble servant,

R. W."

Whether this offer was accepted, it is not in our power to state. But that it is of little consequence; it is enough that it was made; it is enough that the epistle was penned; for it throws a clear light upon the industrious habits and fertile invention of the blacking laureate. It also evinces a humble-mindedness well worthy of imitation by the proud but long-winded and less successful versifiers of the heroic school. He had no objection to stoop. Though the great business of his existence was to sing poems to blacking-pots, he was willing to unbend; to lighten his severer labours, by occasionally throwing off a few "stanzas for music." A business-like precision also peeps forth in handling the delicate subject of "terms." They are to be "reasonable," and, if the rhymes be supplied, subject to a liberal reduction. How gracefully is the poet here blended with the man of business; the muse with the merchant! For an entirely original composition, without rhymes, so much; with ditto, written to order, so much. Like a humble seamstress, this modest poet has no objection to make up his customers' "own materials." This, in a man who offers to write a poem upon any subject they may do him the honour to propose, is an example of condescension probably without parallel.

We must dismiss this amiable specimen of the puff-poets, to make way for another of the tribe—a poet whose private character is of a different though hardly less interesting stamp. Happily, he makes our task a light one. In the character of plaintiff in the Guildhall Court of Requests in London, he tells his own story. He is, to use the expression of an Irish friend, "his own autobiographer." We quote from a London newspaper:—

"Yesterday, at the Guildhall Court of Requests, a poetical puff-writer, of the name of E—, sued a Mr. M—, a quasi wax-candle-maker, for the sum of £1, 4s., said to be incurred for writing a eulogium of the candles of the said Mr. M—. In stating his case, the prosecutor pompously observed, 'I have done a great deal in my day, and have written more poetry than Coleridge, Wordsworth, or Byron. Yes, gentlemen; I write articles of poetry in praise of blacking, ointment, boots, and snuff, which daily appear in the public journals; under—what I call a burning shame—the head advertisement, and consequently my effusions have a greater circulation than those of any poet who ever lived. Having stated my occupation, and who I am, I will now state the reason I come here. 'Tis for justice! This man, for whom and whose candles I sat

up two nights composing that which would give them notoriety, actually refuses to pay me.' The defendant did not deny the bargain, but stated that the poetry was trash—did not come up to his expectations; whereupon the poet, to substantiate his claim, read the lines to the court—

"In praise of candles now I write,  
Which show the most resplendent light;  
Indeed, 'tis true, I am not puffing  
These candles, which require no snuffing.

Oh! some may sing in praise of snuff,  
And many men may call me snuff;  
But I will write of candles still,  
Made by M— of Holborn Hill.

Of brilliant white; they're nice and round;  
And only one-and-four the pound;  
So, ladies, quick your purchase make,  
They're real wax-wicks, and no mistake."

'Now, I should like to know what on earth can make Mr. M— not like that; it is one of my best compositions.' The defendant, a little nonplussed, offered ten shillings and be done with it. But this sum was disdainfully rejected by the poet, who, however, offered to improvise other two verses, and then he would give the whole lot for £1, which, being finally agreed to, the complaint was withdrawn."

With this passage from the life of a puff-poet, we take leave of a truly important subject—important as a means of disproving a too generally received opinion, that in this country, where manufactures and merchandise so extensively flourish, the muses are neglected. So far from this, poetry, we have seen, weaves her fairy spells among the bales of the warehouse—across the very counters of the shops. As a commercial nation, therefore, the people of Great Britain, when called upon to set up a school of national poetry, will be wise in taking their triumphant stand upon the works of their PUFF-POETS.

#### LIFE IN MEXICO.\*

MADAME C—, an English lady, wife of the Spanish ambassador, who had been deputed by Queen Isabella to carry the recognition of independence to Mexico, has favoured the world with an account of her two years' residence in this new American republic, and of what may be considered its present social condition. The work, printed first in the United States—now the permanent home of the authoress—has been reprinted in London by Messrs Chapman and Hall, in connexion with that useful and cheap series of publications, known under the title of the Foreign Library. From the position in society occupied by Madame C—, she possessed a singularly favourable opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with the manners and sentiments of the Mexicans, and of commanding the best sources of information in regard to whatever could interest an enlightened foreigner. It does not appear, however, that she in any case penetrated much deeper than the surface, or beyond what fell under her own immediate range of vision. Her descriptions, which are conveyed in the form of letters to her friends, are always unaffected and good-humoured, often pointed and graphic; but, referring chiefly to external objects and local occurrences, they can scarcely be said to rise beyond the character of that light and easy gossip with which an accomplished lady would be inclined to fill her epistolary correspondence from a foreign country.

The period of Madame C—'s arrival in the country was towards the conclusion of the year 1839. Landing at Vera Cruz, she had the opportunity of there seeing, with best effect, the happy mixture of pomp, rags, and beggary, which distinguishes all Spanish-descended nations. "A singular spectacle the wharf presented. A crowd, as far as the eye could reach, of all ages and sexes of Vera Cruzians (and a very curious set they seemed to be) were assembled to witness his Excellency's arrival. Some had no pantaloons; and others, to make up for their neighbours' deficiencies, had two pair, the upper slit up the side of the leg, Mexican fashion. All had large hats, with silver or bead rolls, and every tinge of dark complexion, from the pure Indian, upwards. Some dresses were entirely composed of rags, clinging together by the attraction of cohesion; others had only a few holes to let in the air. All were crowding, jostling, and nearly throwing each other into the water, and gazing with faces of intense curiosity."

The journey from Vera Cruz to Mexico, the capital of the republic, is performed by a diligence in four days, providing it does not break down, or is not stopped by robbers; either events being not of uncommon occurrence. His Excellency and lady, however, resolved to run all risks, and chose this mode of conveyance. Fortunately, the capital was reached in safety, though not without some bodily fatigue, and a new world was opened to the vivid observation of our fair traveller. In honour of the distinguished visitants, an immense crowd of persons on foot, in carriages, and on horseback, was waiting their approach. "Shortly after, the diligence was stopped, and we were requested to get into a very splendid carriage, all crimson and gold, with the arms of the republic, the eagle and nopal, embroidered in gold on the roof inside, and drawn by four handsome white horses. In the midst of this

\* Life in Mexico, During a Residence of two years in that country, by Madame C— de la B—. London: Chapman and Hall, 1843. [The name of the lady, we understand, is Madame Calderon de la Barca.]

\* It may be necessary to assure our readers that this is a genuine epistle.



immense procession of troops, carriages, and horsemen, we made our entry into the city of Montezuma."

Settled down in a country-house rather prettily situated in the environs, strikingly characteristic objects attract attention from the windows. The most curious are groups of figures—"men bronze colour, with nothing but a piece of blanket thrown round them, carrying lightly on their heads earthen basins, precisely the colour of their own skin, so that they look altogether like figures of terra cotta; these basins filled with sweetmeats or white pyramids of grease (*mantecilla*); women with robesos, short petticoats of two colours, generally all in rags, yet with a lace border appearing on their under garment: no stockings, and dirty white satin shoes, rather shorter than their small brown feet; gentlemen on horseback, with their Mexican saddles and sarapes; lounging *lisperos* [beggars], moving bundles of rags, coming to the windows and begging with a most piteous, but false-sounding whine; or lying under the arches, and lazily inhaling the air and the sunshine, or sitting at the door for hours basking in the sun, or under the shadow of the wall; Indian women, with their tight petticoat of dark stuff and tangled hair, plaited with red ribbon, laying down their baskets to rest, and, meanwhile, deliberately examining the hair of their copper-coloured offspring. We have enough to engage our attention for the present."

Madame C—, if soon made aware that an important piece of etiquette demands attention. "All new arrivals, whatever be their rank, foreign ministers not excepted, must in solemn print give notice to every family of any consideration in the capital that they have arrived, and offer themselves and their house to their 'disposition'; failing in which etiquette, the newly-arrived family will remain unnoticed and unknown." Cards to this effect were speedily issued, and the visitors poured in at all hours. The *début* of our heroine in Mexican society, it was agreed, should be at a great ball given in the theatre for the benefit of the poor, and which was decided by the lady patronesses should be a *bal costumé*. But a question of no small difficulty presented itself. The dress! I have some thoughts, proceeds Madame C—, of going in the costume of the Poblana peasantry. "A white muslin chemise, trimmed with lace round the skirt, neck, and sleeves, which are plaited neatly; a petticoat shorter than the chemise, and divided into two colours, the lower part made generally of a scarlet and black stuff, a manufacture of the country, and the upper part of yellow satin, with a satin vest of some bright colour, and covered with gold or silver, open in front, and turned back. This vest may be worn or omitted, as suits the taste of the wearer. It is without sleeves, but has straps; the hair plaited in two behind, and the plaits turned up, and fastened together by a diamond ring; long ear-rings, and all sorts of chains, and medals, and tinkling things worn round the neck. And, finally, satin shoes trimmed with silver."

The Poblana dress is accordingly fixed upon; but, as it appears, somewhat precipitately. "Yesterday," she continues, "the president, in full uniform, attended by his aide-de-camp, paid me a visit, and sat about half an hour; very amiable as usual. Shortly after came more visits, and just as we had supposed they were all concluded, and we were going to dinner, we were told that the secretary of state, the ministers of war and of the interior, and others, were in the drawing-room. And what do you think was the purport of their visit? To adjure me by all that was most alarming to discard the idea of making my appearance in a Poblana dress! They assured us that Poblana generally were *señoras de rien*; that they wore no stockings; and that the wife of the Spanish minister should by no means assume, even for one evening, such a costume. I brought in my dresses, showed their length and their propriety, but in vain; and, in fact, as to their being in the right, there could be no doubt, and nothing but a kind motive could have induced them to take this trouble; so I yielded with a good grace, and thanked the cabinet council for their timely warning, though fearing, that in this land of procrastination, it would be difficult to procure another dress for the fancy ball; for you must know that our luggage is still toiling its weary way on the backs of mules from Vera Cruz to the capital. They had scarcely gone, when Señor — brought a message from several of the principal ladies here, whom we do not even know, and who had requested that, as a stranger, I should be informed of the reasons which rendered the Poblana dress objectionable in this country, especially on any public occasion like this ball. I was really thankful for my escape."

We are informed that the dress finally adopted "was that of a virtuous Roman Contadina, simple enough to be run up in one day; a white skirt, red bodice, with blue ribbons, and lace veil put on square behind." And with this grave piece of news, and the mention of a plentiful exhibition of velvets, satins, and diamonds at this famous ball, we shall take the liberty of enting short the authoress's somewhat lengthened details of Mexican finery.

Fairly launched into Mexican entertainments, Madame C— had something daily to interest her. The numerous religious fêtes were an unending source of amusement. In Mexico, religion seems to be a kind of drama of daily performance, which rises to great splendour during the week preceding Easter. All business is at this time suspended; the peasants flock from every quarter; the most gorgeous proces-

sions parade the streets. "On Holy Thursday, nothing can be more picturesque than the whole appearance of Mexico. No carriages are permitted; and the ladies, being on foot, take the opportunity of displaying all the riches of their toilet. On this day velvets and satins are your only wear. Diamonds and pearls walk the streets. The mantillas are white or black blonde; the shoes white or coloured satin." The churches were crowded to suffocation; organs pealed their solemn sounds; and before altars blazing in jewels, were prostrated thousands of worshippers. None of these scenes was so touching as that in the church of Santo Domingo. "It looked like a little paradise, or a story in the Arabian Nights. All the steps up the altar were covered with pots of beautiful flowers; orange-trees, loaded with fruit and blossom, and rose-bushes in full bloom, glasses of coloured water, and all kinds of fruit. Cages full of birds, singing delightfully, hung from the wall, and really fine paintings filled up the intervals. A gay carpet covered the floor; and in front of the altar, instead of the usual representation of the Saviour crucified, a little infant Jesus, beautifully done in wax, was lying amidst flowers, with little angels surrounding him. Add to this the music of Romeo and Juliet, and you may imagine that it was more like a scene in an opera than anything in a church. But, certainly, as the rays of the setting sun streamed with a rosy light through the stained windows, throwing a glow over the whole; birds, and flowers, and fruit, paintings and angels, it was the prettiest and most fantastic scene I ever beheld, like something expressly got up for the benefit of children."

The following scene reminds one of the Mysteries of Uolopho. "I paid a visit the other day, which merits to be recorded. It was to the rich Señora —, whose first visit I had not yet returned. She was at home, and I was shown into a very large drawing-room, where, to my surprise, I found the lamps, mirrors, &c., covered with black crape, as in cases of mourning here. I concluded that some one of the family was dead, and that I had made a very ill-timed first visit. However, I sat down, when my eyes were instantly attracted by something awful, placed directly in front of the sofa where I sat. There were six chairs ranged together, and on these lay stretched out a figure, apparently a dead body, about six feet long, enveloped in black cloth, the feet alone visible, from their pushing up the cloth. Oh, horror! Here I sat, my eyes fixed upon this mysterious apparition, and lost in conjecture as to whose body it might be. The master of the house! He was very tall, and, being in bad health, might have died suddenly. My being received argued nothing against this, since the first nine days after a death the house is invariably crowded with friends and acquaintances, and the widow, or orphan, or childless mother, must receive the condolences of all and sundry in the midst of her first bitter sorrow. There seems to be no idea of grief wishing for solitude.

Pending these reflections, I sat uneasily, feeling or fancying a heavy air in the apartment, and wishing, most sincerely, that some living person would enter. I thought even of slipping away, but feared to give offence, and, in fact, began to grow so nervous, that when the Señora de — entered at length, I started up as if I had heard a pistol. She wore a coloured muslin gown and a blue shawl; no signs of mourning!

After the usual complimentary preface, I asked particularly after her husband, keeping a side glance on the mysterious figure. He was pretty well. Her family! Just recovered from the small-pox, after being severely ill. "Not dangerously!" said I hesitatingly, thinking she might have a tall son, and that she alluded to the recovery of the others. "No," but her sister's children had been alarmingly ill. "Not lost any, I hope?" "None." Well, so taken up was I, that conversation flagged, and I answered and asked questions at random, until at last I happened to ask the lady if she were going to the country soon. "Not to remain. But to-morrow we are going to convey a *Santo Cristo* (a figure of the Crucifixion) there, which has just been made for the chapel," glancing towards the figure; "for which reason this room is, as you see, hung with black."

It may be added, that the manufacture of figures in wax, and other materials, illustrative of costumes, and also of Scripture subjects, is carried on to a considerable extent. Other branches of the fine arts have declined greatly since the visit of Humboldt. A tawdry elegance is everywhere observable, to the neglect of objects of utility. The most gorgeous processions walk over streets badly paved, and dirty in the extreme; while the floors of the most splendid churches, open to all comers, are too nauseous to bear minute description.

Education is in an exceedingly low condition in Mexico. Literature can hardly be said to exist; a few meagre newspapers, and a monthly periodical, forming almost the entire list of current publications. Out-door recreations, balls, masquerades, and fêtes, are the universal means of passing the time. Regular industry is not considered creditable, and every kind of rural labour is conducted by the long-depressed Indians and liberated persons of colour. The catching of and fighting with bulls are still among the barbarous amusements of the people. Our authoress went to an exhibition of this nature. "Three or four bulls are driven in. They stand for a moment, proudly reconnoitring their opponents. The horsemen gallop up, armed only with

the lasso, and with loud insulting cries of '*¡Ah toro!*' challenge them to the contest. The bulls paw the ground, then plunge furiously at the horses, frequently wounding them at the first onset. Round they go in fierce gallop, bulls and horsemen, amidst the cries and shouts of the spectators. The horseman throws the lasso. The bull shakes his head free of the cord, tosses his horns proudly, and gallops on. But his fate is inevitable. Down comes the whirling rope, and encircles his thick neck. He is thrown down, struggling furiously, and repeatedly dashes his head against the ground in rage and despair. Then, his legs being also tied, the man with the hissing red-hot iron in the form of a letter, brands him on the side with the token of his dependence on the lord of the soil. Some of the bulls stand this martyrdom with Spartan heroism, and do not utter a cry; but others, when the iron enters their flesh, burst out into long bellowing roars, that seem to echo through the whole country. They are then loosened, get upon their legs again, and, like so many branded Cain, are driven out into the country to make way for others. Such roaring, such shouting, such an odour of singed hair and *biftek au naturel*, such playing of music, and such wanton risks as were run by the men!" She also attended a bull-fight, where eight noble animals were, one after the other, maddened and put to death, amidst the plaudits of the gay multitude. "The scene," she observes, "is altogether fine, the address amusing, but the wounding and tormenting of the bull is sickening. It cannot be good to accustom a people to such bloody sights." We should think not.

An unquenchable love of frivolities, imperfect education, lack of industrious habits, and the imbecility of government; but, above all, the want of common sense, have conspired to render the republic of Mexico little better than a horde of mountebanks, beggars, and highwaymen. One is, indeed, inclined to wonder how such a nation can possibly hang together. Madame C— declares she had the greatest possible difficulty in getting domestic servants to work, particularly if not allowed to do as they like, and wear dirty white satin shoes. "Why did you leave so excellent a situation, when you got twelve dollars a-month?" was one day asked of a female mendicant in rags. "Ah!" she replied, "if you only knew the pleasure of doing nothing." The love of doing nothing is only excelled by the passion for bonfires and crackers, and these the common people enjoy by day as much as by night. "What do you suppose the Mexicans will be doing now?" said King Ferdinand to a Mexican, who was at the Spanish court, shortly after the final success of the revolutionists. "Letting off rockets, your majesty," answered the Mexican. "Well, I wonder what they are doing now in Mexico?" said the king in the afternoon. "*Tirando cohetes*—letting off rockets, your majesty." His majesty chose to repeat the question in the evening. "What will your countrymen be doing now?" "The same thing, your majesty. Still letting off rockets."

## PRISON ROSES.\*

A TALE.

My dear young reader, have you ever seen a prison? If not, you probably associate with the idea a huge ugly building, with long narrow passages, dark dismal dungeons, and a total absence of air, light, and cleanliness. Thanks to Providence and the excellent Howard, *come* (not, alas! *all*) of our places of confinement are widely different; spacious and lofty as palaces, airy as ventilation can make them, and visited by the sun as freely as the smiling world beyond them. But still there are many bolts to be drawn, and huge keys to be turned, before one can even get in; and there are tread-mills for the idle, solitary cells for the hardened, and a chapel all grated round, that lends awe and terror to the very blessed word of life itself! Even to the innocent victim of suspicion, who can look up fearlessly to the Judge of all, and to the oppressed debtor, whose misfortune, not his fault, has made him a beggar, there is absence of familiar faces and privation of precious liberty; in short, with all the ameliorations Christian benevolence can shed around the prison, it must be a prison still; and this I felt on visiting the princely jail of —.

But of all the contrasts which this place of intended reformation presented with my former ideas, and with the character of its inhabitants, the most touching to a visitor was the effort of well meant industry which had converted a small interior court, leading too often "from prison to judgment," into a gay and trim parterre, blooming like any cottage garden with roses and other flowers. "Prison roses!" ejaculated I, as I for the first time gazed on buds thus nurtured—watered, no doubt, with many a bitter passing tear, and destined, from their awful situation, directly beneath the gateway used as the place of execution, to receive the parting gaze of many a wretch,

Looking on earth, and sun, and sky,  
As what he ne'er might see again.

I could not help standing spell-bound beside the most flourishing of the rose bushes, which, in its June luxuriance, looked as if the bowers of Eden, and not an earthly pandemonium, would have been its more

\* The above story appeared a few years ago in an annual, from which it is now reprinted, with the permission of the author.



appropriate climate. I asked permission of the turnkey who accompanied us to gather one of the unconscious buds, assigning as my reason the singularity of the situation in which it had grown. "It was but a waste unsightly bit of ground, ma'am," said the jailer, "when our present porter came here; and as he had been bred a gardener, and had a great deal of spare time on his hands, he asked leave to turn it into those two flower-beds you see. Most folks say they are out of character here—and so, mayhap, they be; but I scarce think you'll say so when I tell you that rose tree saved an innocent person's life." "How so?" asked I, with natural interest. "It's a long story, ma'am," said the officer hesitatingly, "and my time will hardly allow of my telling it; but as you go out, if you'll please to rest in the porter's lodge, you can't make the old man happier than by asking him all about it."

We followed the turnkey's advice, and prefacing my request with some compliments to the old florist on his choice collection of roses, he at once gave us the history of the one I had been plundering.

"It's about five years, ma'am, come next assizes, since a poor woman was confined here for being concerned in robbing a house intrusted to her care. She had been the gentleman's laundress for several years, and from his opinion of her honesty, was employed by him to keep his house during the absence of the family at the sea-side. The poor creature watched her trust faithfully day and night, till she heard of the dangerous condition of a married daughter some miles off; when, committing, as she said, her master's property to the keeping of Providence for a night, she could not resist setting off to nurse her dying child. Some villains, who were lurking in the neighbourhood, availed themselves of the circumstance, and Martha, on returning from laying a dead baby in a dead mother's arms, found her master's house rifled of everything valuable, herself justly blamed for criminal negligence, and next charged with being implicated in the robbery itself. The thieves, unable to dispose as quickly as they wished of all the stolen property, were obliged to hide some of it; and no place appeared to them so fit as poor old Martha's garden, when, if discovered, the blame would naturally fall upon her. The ground was soft and wet at the time, and much as they had tried to conceal their footsteps—murder, they say, will out, and so will robbery. While Martha, half-distracted between her daughter's death and the loss of her character, was crying before the magistrates engaged in examining the case, her premises had been, as a matter of course, searched; and what was the poor creature's consternation to hear that two chests, containing linen, had been found in her own garden! Protestations would hardly have availed her, had she been able to make them. Her going away—though but too natural in a mother—was so suspicious, and the whole matter so like connivance, that to jail she went of course, as an accomplice or resetter at the very least.

It is at all times a hardship, ma'am, and no one knows it better than we do, to a labouring person to be shut up, deprived of all means of earning her bread, and all her little affairs going, it may be, to ruin and confusion; but what it was to Martha, no one can fully conceive. Her own honest calling was knocked up, and probably for ever; but it was for her daughter's orphans that her heart yearned most bitterly. Their father was far off at sea—and four little creatures, under seven, had no one to look after them but an elder sister of hardly ten.

No sooner did this good child hear of her granny's deplorable case, than she left her brothers and sisters with a neighbour, and walked four miles to the jail. She was quite ashamed to ring at so fine a place, and the very sight of that huge iron door made her heart die within her. I daresay she might have stood for ever, had not a countryman come in with a great sack of wheat for the tread-mill, and nearly knocked over the poor little petitioner before he was aware; he was a good natured fellow, however, and to make amends for the fright, he took her by the hand, and brought her to me. 'Here's a little one crying mortally, master porter,' says he; 'I suppose she be daughter to some of your jail birds aloft, and wants to see un.' 'My granny is an honest woman,' sobbed out the poor child, 'and never wronged any one; do let me go to my poor granny.' 'Where are your father and mother, child?' said I; 'they would ha' more sense to do her services.' 'My father's in the West Indies, sir,' answered she, quite sensible, 'and my poor mother's in the churchyard. Do let me see granny, that I may go back and give the little ones their dinner.' 'What little ones? are you the eldest?' 'Yes, sir, of five; and no one to do for them but myself, now that God has taken my mother, and wicked men granny.'

I took the child in my hand, and sending word to the turnkey to call down old Martha to the visiting cell, stood myself on one side the grate (you saw it, of course, ma'am, as you went through), and the poor grandmother soon appeared on the other. When little Jane, that was her name, found that, instead of kissing and crying over her dear granny, she could get no nearer her than across a five-foot passage, with two iron gratings between, she sobbed violently, and squeezed her head against the bars, as ever you saw a poor caged bird do. Martha was nearly overcome by the sight; but she was a good pious woman, and had committed her cause to one above; so she did her best to comfort her grandchild, and gave her a world of good advice how to manage the little ones and be a

mother to them. Many a pious comfortable word it has been my lot to hear from the outer side of that wicket to the poor deluded ones within; but it is not often the prisoner turns preacher and comforter, as Martha did.

'Go your ways home, my dear,' said she, 'and do your duty to the little ones there; I shall never repent having done mine to my own poor child that is gone; but I am justly punished for not getting some one to take my charge while away—it was tempting Providence! However, if it be His will, something will come out on the trial to prove me innocent; if not, I bless Him and the good gentleman that built this place, that I can sit and knit and read my Bible, in my own quiet cell, instead of being in a vile common room, hearing curses from morning till night. God bless you, Jane; you may come back and see me when you are quite sure the children are safe with some good neighbour; but take warning, and never desert your duty, as I did mine.'

Little Jane cried bitterly, and promised to mind all her granny had said, and return whenever she could be spared. This was not often; but the little maid was a general favourite, and there were many in the village who would bring their work to the desolate hearth, and rock the cradle of the motherless child while Jane ran to comfort and attend on her grandmother.

The only luxury which the old woman prized was the proverbial one of her profession—a drop of good tea; but this her confinement prevented her from earning; and though cheerful and contented over our wholesome prison fare, she missed her accustomed cordial. Little Jane guessed as much; and one day, as she was going out, took courage, from my hearty good will to her, to say how much she wished it were possible for her to make sixpence in any lawful way. 'Make sixpence!' said I, child; and why? She told me with some hesitation, and I answered, 'Jane, I am not rich, but I could give you sixpence, I daresay, for so good a purpose; and so I will, if a thought that has just come into my head fails. To-morrow the assizes begin (though your poor granny's trial will not come on till near the end). There will be plenty of company in town, and balls in the evening, and no doubt the ladies will like nosegays for them. I'll give you some every day from my garden, and you shall stand at the door of the King's Arms, and try to sell them; and if you do, a proud girl you'll be to carry your granny an ounce of tea of your own earning. My roses are the best and earliest in the place, thanks to these high walls, though their shelter's none of the kindest; this bush here (the one you've got in your hand, ma'am) is a very rare sort. I had it from my old master's garden in the park, and there are not ten trees of it in England. See, there will be half-a-dozen blown upon it by to-morrow.

On the morrow Jane came, dressed in her neat brown stuff frock, with a clean white apron, and a straw bonnet of her own plaiting. She was afraid to encounter the crowds round the inn door; and, to say the truth, on second thoughts I durst not send her there, for fear of being rode over or knocked down in the bustle; so I advised her rather to ply her trade at the New Spa, where I thought the young ladies were likely to take shelter from the crowd. She did so, and had not stood long with her modest face and civil manners, offering her nice nosegay, when the three put together drew the attention of a tall elderly gentleman, who, with his two daughters, had come to drink the waters. 'Ha!' said he to the ladies, 'there's a pretty little country maid selling roses; ay, and very choice ones they are. What say you, girls, to a bouquet, to remind you of home? Pray, child,' asked he, looking at the flowers very sharply, 'for he was a bit of a florist, 'where did this rose unique grow?' 'In the county jail, please your honour,' answered the little girl all in a tremble, for he was a quick gentleman, and spoke as if he thought she might have stolen them; 'the door-keeper gave them me when I went to see poor granny.'

'Prison roses!' cried one of the young ladies, gazing curiously on the pretty unconscious flowers. 'Who would have thought you could thrive in such a climate?'

'Is your grandmother a prisoner, child?' asked the old gentleman quickly, but not unkindly; 'and for what offence?' 'For going to see mammy die,' answered little Jane innocently. 'Mother went to heaven and took my little brother with her, and poor granny is in jail because wicked men stole her master's things while she was absent.' 'She should have got some one to watch for her,' said he; 'but the case seems a cruel one too. How came she implicated in the robbery?' 'Because, sir, the things were found in her garden; though God only knows how, or who put them there.' 'What shameful villany!' exclaimed the ladies. 'Very unlucky!' said the gentleman, rubbing his forehead. 'Is there no one here can vouch for your grandmother's character?' 'Sure, sir, every one can,' answered Jane in her simple way; 'no one in — but knows old Martha Wilkins!' 'Wilkins!' repeated the gentleman. 'Wilkins!' screamed out both ladies. 'Can it be our old nurse Martha? Did she ever live in Dorsetshire? Was her husband a gamekeeper? What family had she?' Little Jane knew nothing about matters which happened before she was born, but she could answer the last question in a way that settled it all. 'One daughter only, if you please, sir; my poor mammy that is gone; and

that made her so anxious to see her dear Mary Jane before she died.' 'Mary Jane! No doubt remains!' cried the two young ladies, whose joint names had been bestowed on nurse's child. 'O, papa, let us go to the prison to see dear Martha!' 'Patience, children,' answered the old gentleman, who seemed, however, as glad as any of them; 'there will be a sad bustle to-day at the jail, and besides, to see Martha with any comfort, we must have an order: I'll speak to the high sheriff by and by, when the court breaks up; and in the mean time, I see the little girl is anxious to be off.' 'Please your honour,' said Jane, 'I'm in no great hurry, only—only—I've four miles to walk, and the children's dinner to get, and granny's tea to buy besides.' 'So, it was to buy tea for granny you took to selling roses. Good girl; here's a shilling instead of sixpence for you; run to the jail and tell Martha that Mr Daecres of Ashleigh is in town to befriend her; it will do her more good than all the tea in China.'

'And here's something for yourself,' cried Miss Mary, 'for being so dutiful.' 'And something to buy toys for the children,' cried Miss Jane to her pretty namesake—and she ran off as gaily to prison as if it had been a palace.

Martha shed tears of joy when she heard of the unexpected arrival of her old master, and his meeting with her child. She acknowledged the hand of Providence in it, as she did in everything else, and cried more when she saw the grandest gentleman in Dorsetshire stoop to visit her in her cell, and his nicely dressed daughters sit down on her clean but lowly bed, than she had done when she first heard of her misfortune.

Mr Daecres had no need to interfere to get justice for his old servant in a land where it is the birthright of the meaneast. But she was saved the agitation even of an acquittal, by his exerting himself to get the thieves (who were convicted for other burglaries) to acknowledge her innocence before the trial. It might otherwise have gone hard with Martha in this world—for no one is infallible, ladies; not even judges; and appearances were sadly against her. But all's well that ends well. Mr Daecres took her out of jail in his own coach, and settled her in a cottage on his estate. Jane's father is married again to a good sort of motherly woman; and she herself now waits on the two young ladies. They come every year to drink the waters, and the first thing they do is to send Jane for one of my prison roses. The story has made my bush famous; and I thought you might like to hear it, as you seemed to admire the flowers so much. I wish you could see Jane's cheeks when I tell it—no roses in England can match them!

You'll excuse an old man's freedom, ladies; but Jane and my roses make me always forget myself."

"We, at least, run no risk of forgetting either, my good friend," said I cordially; "and may we all remember, that from trifling acts of duty and industry, under the blessing of Providence, important benefits may be made to flow."

## RURAL GAMES OF OLD TIMES.

### OUT-OF-DOOR GAMES.

The old rural games are so nearly abolished, that many persons perhaps scarcely know any of them excepting by name. Some are entirely, or all but entirely extinct, and others are only kept up in out-of-the-way nooks of the country, where modern manners have been less successful in intruding. Perhaps this is a consummation not devoutly to be wished, for, though there may have been a little roughness and somewhat of a coarse taste in some of these old sports, they had also many unquestionable merits—for example, that of bringing neighbours sociably and good-humouredly together, and still more, in some instances, that of affording healthful exercise and relaxation. It is vain, of course, to think of urging the practical revival and encouragement of such sports, as mankind in general are no more to be drummed into amusements than into anything more serious; but we may at least endeavour to enliven a half hour by the recollection of a few of them. And first as to the Out-of-Door Games.

*Base or Prison Bars* is one of these games, which is never practised except in school playgrounds. Yet it is alluded to oftener than once by Shakespeare: first in *Venus and Adonis*, in the famous description of the horse—

Sometimes he scuds far off, and there he stares;  
Anon he starts at stirring of a feather;  
To bid the wind a base he now prepares.

Then in *Cymbeline*—

He with two striplings, lads more like to run  
The country base, than to commit such slaughter,  
Made good the passage.

Drayton and Spenser, contemporaries of Shakespeare, also allude to *Prison Base*. It was a running game, and therefore, we may presume, chiefly a youths' amusement; yet it is also known to have been played by men in Cheshire and the counties adjoining, within the memory of the present generation. It is mentioned so long ago as the reign of Edward III., when an order of parliament forbade "boys and others" to play at it in the avenues of the palace at Westminster, on account of the interruption which it gave to the members passing to and fro as their business required.



"The performance of this pastime requires," says Mr Strutt, "two parties of equal number, each of them having a base or home, as it is usually called, to themselves, at the distance of about twenty or thirty yards. The players then on either side taking hold of hands, extend themselves in length, and opposite to each other, as far as they conveniently can, always remembering that one of them must touch the base; when any of them quits the hand of his fellow and runs into the field, which is called giving the chase, he is immediately followed by one of his opponents; he, again, is followed by a second from the former side, and he by a second opponent; and so on alternately, until as many are out as choose to run, every one pursuing the man he first followed, and no other; and if he overtake him near enough to touch him, his party claims one towards their game, and both return home. They then run forth again and again in like manner, until the number is completed that decides the victory. This number is optional, and rarely exceeds twenty. It is to be observed, that every person on either side who touches another during the chase, claims one for his party; and when many are out, it frequently happens that many are touched." This seems to be an imperfect mode of the game. To make it complete, and entitled to its name, which seems originally to have been *Bars*—it is necessary to have on each side a row of stakes driven into the ground about thirty yards in advance of the home boundaries; and this row of stakes is called the Prison. Such was the arrangement adopted in Essex, where the game was played by men since the beginning of the reign of George III. Every person touched on either side in the chase was brought to the prison of his party, which, it will be remarked, was much nearer to the home of the opposite party than to his own. There he was obliged to remain till the end of the game, unless relieved by one of his associates, which could only be done by touching him. To accomplish this was of course a task of no small difficulty; for, in making a dash at the enemy's prison, he was very apt to be touched by some agile-footed adversary, and made himself a prisoner. The catching of the whole of the opposite party would of course conclude the game. It may easily be imagined that no small pleasantry would attend the various adventures of this ancient sport.

Much akin to Base appears to have been *Barley-break*, which is also alluded to by several of the poets of the Elizabethan age. In Scotland, at no distant time, it was a favourite amusement of the young people about a farm-house, and was generally played in the stackyard, in the following manner: a stack was fixed as the *dule*, or goal; and one person was appointed to catch the rest of the company, who ran out from the *dule*. When they had all gone, and were out of sight, he set off to catch them. Any one whom he took was considered as a prisoner, and had to assist in catching the rest. When all were taken, the game was finished; and he who had been first taken became the captor in the next game. The sport was commonly called, rhymingly, *Barley bracks about the stacks*, and we may suppose it to have been what Miss Elliot partly had in her recollection when she depicted the blighting effects of Flodden fight in her beautiful ballad. To despatch the etymology of the question at once, *barley* is *parley*, or truce, and the name of the game seems therefore to refer to its commencement, when the parties *break* away from a condition of peace into a state of hostility. But the pastime of Elizabeth's days was considerably different from that practised "bout stacks in the gloaming" by our Scottish "swankies." It seems to have been performed by three couples, one of which took a central place, bearing the name which fashionable preachers are said to be chary of mentioning before polite audiences. We may presume, from the allusions of Sidney, Suckling, Herrick, Massinger, and others, that this simple game was often the amusement of ladies and gentlemen in the neighbourhood of country seats, in the days of Elizabeth and James.

The boys of the border counties have a game peculiar to themselves, which a good deal resembles Base and Barley-break. It is called *Scots and English*, or the *Raid* (that is, *inroad*), and evidently mimics the hostile and predatory practices of the two nations when they were as yet twain, and when the border was the scene of almost ceaseless mutual aggression. Two leaders are first chosen, called captains, and these two then proceed to form their parties, which is done in this manner. Joining their hands, and holding them pretty high, they allow the other boys to pass through between them in a continuous string—crying,

Brother Jack, if ye'll be mine,  
I will give you claret wine;  
Claret wine is good and fine—  
Through the needle-e-e, boys!

At the end of the verse, they lower their arms and enclose the boy who is passing, and ask him which side he will choose. He is disposed of according to his choice; and the same ceremony is repeated, till all have been set on one side or the other. They then take off their coats, vests, handkerchiefs, and caps, and place them respectively in heaps at the distance of some fifty yards from each other, a stone being placed between to denote the boundary line between the two supposed kingdoms. The articles laid down are called *wads*, which is Scotch for pledges. Hence *wadset*, our law word for a mortgage; hence, also, it is supposed, the more prevalent word *wedding*. The two parties

come up to the imaginary border, and prepare to make inroads into each others' territories. At Hawick—according to the recollection of Sir Walter Scott, with whom we have conversed on this subject—the Scottish party cry out tauntingly to the other—

King Covenantor,  
Come out if ye dare venture,  
Set your foot on Scotch ground, English, if ye dare!

According to Hutton, the historian of the Roman Wall, the English call out, at the moment of their making the venture, "Here's a leap into thy land, dry-bellied Scot!" The object is to make an attack on the heap of wads belonging to the opposite party, and get back to their own territory without being caught, which, it may well be believed, is no easy matter, where all are so vigilant. Any one who is caught is set aside, and can only be restored to freedom by being re-taken by one of his own associates. The game is decided when one party has taken all the property or men of the other.

There are several children's games, which consist, like the above, mainly in agile running, but are generally more simple in character. Such is *Hunt the Fox*, in which a boy, acting that animal, had law given him, and then became an object of pursuit to all the rest, who made their best endeavours to catch him before he could return to the starting-place, or home. Another and still simpler game was variously called in England and Scotland, *All-hid*, *Harry Racket*, *Hoop and Hide*, and *Hide-ee*. Shakespeare unquestionably alludes to the two together in *Hamlet*, "Hide fox and all after." *All-hid*, or *Hide-ee*, is played in the following manner in Scotland. A set of boys are arranged in rank, and one stands in front, repeating some kind of rude rhyme, and at every word touching one of the party in succession. He who is touched at the pronunciation of the last word becomes the pursuer or seeker, and has to turn his face to the wall, while all the rest go to conceal themselves in the best way they can in the neighbourhood. When they are all hid, some one cries "hide-ee," as a signal that he is now at liberty to come in search of them. He does his best to find out their lurking places, while they, at convenient opportunities, when they think they can do it safely, fly towards the home. If he can catch any one either in a lurking place, or while he is flying home, that person becomes the pursuer in the next instance. It seems not quite preposterous to take this pains to describe a sport which has been mentioned in Shakespeare's inspired pages.

One called in England *Dum and Mouse*, or *Kiss in the Ring*, was played in Dumfriesshire fifty years ago by grown lads and lasses as well as children. For instance, the whole of the young people assembled at a rustic wedding—perhaps a hundred in number—would be ready to fall a-playing it on the green. They first joined hands in a ring, standing at the utmost possible distance from each other. One person, appointed to the office by acclamation, then came lounging up, and walked with apparent carelessness along the outside of the ring, with his right hand in his pocket, saying half to himself—

There's peace and groats in my coat pouch,  
They'll no come out this hour yet,  
No this half,  
No this half,  
No this hale half hour yet.

And this he would repeat with the same air of affected carelessness, till he saw a proper opportunity, when he would suddenly cry, "But now they're out," and at the same instant touch some particular person, immediately starting off at his utmost speed, threading the circle round and round under the extended hands. It was the duty of the touched person to pursue as quickly as possible, and to follow him through precisely the same threadings, however wide or close these might be. If the pursued party was overtaken, he had to deposit a wad, and begin the game anew in the same style. If the pursuer failed in catching the other, or went through a wrong threading, or missed one, he in like manner forfeited a wad, and had to take the place of the former party. The losing of the wads followed in the usual manner, to the excitement of an infinite deal of mirth. One, to recover his wad, would be allowed to choose between obeying three commands, or answering three questions—such commands as, "Go and kiss auld aunty Grizy;" and such questions as, "If you were placed between Sally Gibson and Mary Morison (two noted belles of the district), to which hand would you turn?" In England, the game is occasionally played, even yet, by an equal number of both sexes; it being necessary that a boy should touch a girl, and a girl a boy. When either is brought to a forfeit, it is paid by their going into the middle of the ring, and there kissing each other; but such games, and the correct habits which admitted of their unrestrained exercise, are fast disappearing. Blest days of innocence and simplicity, when will ye return!

#### INJURIES TO PUBLIC GARDENS.

The English are perhaps the only people in Europe who cannot be admitted freely into public walks, gardens, or buildings, without committing some injury or offence. Names are cut on trees or benches, or something or other is mutilated or defaced. It is very different on the continent. The public gardens at Frankfurt are only separated from a high road by a single rail, and yet nothing is injured, although no one is excluded. In these gardens, a nightingale had for many years built its nest on a particular spot, close to one of the walks. It was

seen by every one, and yet no one molested it; until one day a foreign servant saw and took it. When it became known, the man was hunted by a mob, taken before the city authorities, and the fact being proved, he was sentenced to have his coat turned, to be drummed out of the city with every mark of disgrace, and never to enter it again. I am inclined to hope that by degrees we are becoming more manners and trust-worthy *eight-acers* than we have hitherto been. The fine gardens of Hampton-Court palace are now thrown completely open to the public; and I believe that the instances are very rare in which any injury is done to the plants.—*Jesse's Gleanings in Natural History*. [Our belief is, that it is not the working-classes who commit the outrages above alluded to, but thoughtless young persons of the middle and upper classes. During the debate on the bill for throwing open national monuments, institutions, and gardens to the public at large, a statesman happily, and, we have good reason to think, truly characterised the most reckless depredators as "the vulgar rich."]

#### BIOGRAPHIC SKETCHES.

##### ROBERT POLLOK.

ROBERT POLLOK, author of "The Course of Time," which may be described as perhaps the most popular poem published during the last twenty years, was, as we learn from a biography by his surviving brother,\* the youngest but one of a family of eight children born to John Pollok, a small farmer at North Moorhouse, in the parish of Eaglesham, Renfrewshire. He here first saw the light on the 19th of October 1798. His mother, who was his first teacher, taught him to read the Bible, and to commit to memory the Shorter Catechism, with part of the Psalms of David. On one occasion, speaking of the theological doctrines in "The Course of Time," he said, "It has my mother's divinity, the divinity that she taught me when a boy. I may have amplified it from what I learned afterwards; but, in writing the poem, I always found that hers formed the groundwork—the point from which I set out." His education from his eighth to his fifteenth year was chiefly at the parish school of Mearns, where he was taught English reading, writing, and arithmetic. His attendance at school, however, was often interrupted, especially during summer, when he was employed in assisting his father in the work of the farm; and from his fifteenth till he had completed his seventeenth year, he was regularly engaged in agricultural operations. At that period he formed the resolution of giving up farming, and of studying for the ministry of the gospel in the United Secession church, with which his parents were connected. Accordingly, with a view to prepare himself for this office, he entered on the study of the Latin language in December 1815, at the parish school of Fenwick; and in November 1817, when he had completed his nineteenth year, he enrolled himself as a student in the university of Glasgow. During the five succeeding sessions, he attended the usual literary and philosophical classes, spending the long vacations for the most part in his father's house. He devoted himself to his studies with great diligence; and his career at college was highly respectable, but seems to have given no indications of his future eminence. Some poetical pieces, which he wrote at that period, met with no great favour among the professors, and are, it must be confessed, of a tame and prosaic character. Having finished his classical and philosophical education at the university, he entered on the study of theology, August 1822, in the divinity hall of the Secession church.

In the beginning of the summer of 1823, Pollok wrote his first published work, "Helen of the Glen." This tale, which was never transcribed, was planned and composed in the course of one week. He sold the copyright of the work during the following autumn to Mr Collins, bookseller in Glasgow, for £15, and it was soon after put to press. He afterwards wrote two other short tales, "Ralph Gemmel" and "The Persecuted Family," portraying the sufferings of the Scottish covenanter during the reigns of Charles II. and James VII; but in none of these prose pieces was there any particular merit, though they were written in a popular strain.

In November 1824, Pollok entered as a student of theology in the divinity hall of the university of Glasgow, and in the December following, began "The Course of Time," which was finished in July 1826, having been composed at three different periods, with considerable intervals between each; according to the author's own account, he was engaged in actual writing only eight months. The work was prosecuted under very considerable difficulties, which at times produced great depression of mind. At one period, indeed, he was so completely overpowered by the state of his health, and the heavy pressure of pecuniary wants, that he was obliged to discontinue his labours. His correspondence with his brother during the progress of his poem, presents an affecting detail of the circumstances under which it was composed. In January 1826, he thus writes: "The coldness of the weather, and the badness of the house, and the heavy pressure of pecuniary concerns, when I was surrounded with a thousand thoughts, so overpowered my body and mind, that for some weeks I stooped down, and the billows passed over

\* Life of Robert Pollok, author of "The Course of Time." By his brother, David Pollok, A.M. Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh and London. 1843.



me. My father noticed the fearful and dangerous state of my mind, and insisted that I should go to Glasgow, hoping that company and better lodging might recover me; and, indeed, although slowly, I did recover, and resumed my study. Some weeks passed, however, before I regained confidence in myself, for I felt as if my mind had been shattered to pieces. Again, about two months later, he says—"I have finished, since I began last winter, three books of my poem, and find at present my health very much in need of repair. I do not intend to write any more for some time, and shall pay every attention to my health. I am dreadfully hunted just now for money, and have been threatened with prosecution from different quarters. Although my whole debt is not much above £20, and although £12 would free me from present embarrassment, I have not the means of raising even that small sum. Thus menaced with creditors, and scarcely able to fly out of their way, I am a little perplexed; but I am labouring to let nothing take so much effect upon my spirits as to hurt my health. My present situation, however, does not afford the very first accommodation for one just come out of a severe mental exertion."

A month after he finished "The Course of Time," Pollok returned to the divinity hall, and completed his theological studies. In November he entered upon trials for license, as it is termed, before the presbytery of Edinburgh; and about the same time he offered his poem for publication to the late Mr Blackwood. It had the good fortune to gain the attention of this acute judge of literary productions; he saw its merits, and was confirmed in his own opinion by those of Professor Wilson and Mr D. M. Moir. It was accordingly published by him in March 1827, upon the common principle of a division of profits. It immediately produced considerable sensation in Edinburgh; and the first edition, we believe, was disposed of in the course of a few weeks. The difficulties of the author were now at length overcome; his anxieties were removed; his mind regained its usual tranquillity; fame, wealth, and extensive usefulness, seemed placed within his grasp. But he was now to pay the penalty of his previous labour; and his health soon gave unequivocal evidence that, in composing his celebrated work, he had only erected a splendid monument to deck his tomb. A constitution, originally good, was partially injured in boyhood by over-exertion in running, and the mental distresses and taskings of the last few years had completed its destruction. Absorbed in the one grand object, lonely, without funds, without counsel, the poet had allowed symptoms of illness to advance upon him without having recourse to medical advice. While engaged in correcting the proof-sheets of his poem, he was so weak and so much exhausted, that he could not sit at table to write; and his close application to the task of revision and correction produced an irritating bodily and mental excitement that entirely took away his sleep. It was at this time, also, that he completed his professional studies, and took from the Associate Synod, a license as a preacher. On the day after this event, he officiated in one of the chapels in connexion with that body in Edinburgh, with credit to himself and satisfaction to his hearers. The late Dr Belfrage of Slateford, who was one of the audience on the occasion, told him that he was weaker and in a worse state of health than he himself seemed to be aware, and invited him to spend a few weeks at his house for the benefit of his health, an invitation which Pollok gratefully accepted. During his residence at Slateford, Dr Belfrage and his son assiduously waited on him night and day; and, not contented with their own skill, procured for him the attendance of some of the most eminent physicians in Edinburgh. He received numerous attentions also from various distinguished literary persons in Edinburgh; but what gratified him most, was the kindness which he received from the venerable author of "The Man of Feeling," then in the eighty-fourth year of his age. "I felt his attention," says he, "to be as if some literary patriarch had risen from the grave to bless me and do me honour." His disease continuing to gain ground, in spite of the exertions of physicians, his friends at length resolved that he should pass the winter in Italy; and several gentlemen, among whom the late Sir John Sinclair deserves especial notice, raised a fund for defraying his expenses, and made every arrangement that could promote his welfare and comfort. Accordingly, about the end of August, Pollok sailed for London, with a view to proceed to Italy; but on his arrival in the metropolis, his strength was so much reduced, that he was unable to undergo the fatigue of the voyage; and having been recommended to repair to some genial spot in the south of England, he took up his residence at Shirley Common, in the neighbourhood of Southampton. He expired there on the 18th of September 1827, in the twenty-ninth year of his age, and was buried in the churchyard of Millbrook, where a monument has been erected over his grave, the cost of which was defrayed out of the funds that had been raised for the purpose of enabling him to visit Italy.

With regard to Pollok's personal character and habits, all that we are told of him leaves the impression of "a strong-minded, courageous, determined, sarcastic, somewhat dogmatical, and earnest spirit." His manners were easy, natural, and unaffected. He had no eccentric habits of any kind, and was generally frank, open, and affable. "The Course of Time," on

which his fame rests, has obtained a degree of popularity scarcely equalled by any other poem of the age. It has now reached a sixteenth edition, and we understand that nearly forty thousand copies have been disposed of in the course of about fifteen years. This remarkable popularity is of itself a proof that the work possesses merits of no common order; and taking into consideration the youth of the poet, the time spent in the composition, and the difficulties of the author, it is impossible to deny that it is a very remarkable production. Every page bears the stamp of the author's personal character; his powerful thinking, his fearlessness, his bitter sarcasm, dogmatism, and earnestness. It is full of noble thoughts and graphic conceptions, and though not without many touches of true genius, yet chiefly characterised by a vigorous and searching intellect. Pollok's peculiar power, indeed, was intellect. "The Course of Time" is evidently the production of an honest man, firmly convinced of the truth of every word which he utters. Closely connected with this is the tone of self-confidence with which the work is pervaded. No momentary misgivings, no doubts respecting any part of his creed, ever appear to have entered the mind of Pollok. What Charles Lamb has said of Scotchmen in general was eminently true of him. "He has no falterings of self-suspicion. Surmises, guesses, misgivings, half intuitions, semi-consciousnesses, partial illuminations, dim instincts, embryo conceptions, have no place in his brain or vocabulary. The twilight of dubiety never falls upon him. Between the affirmative and the negative, there is no borderland with him. You cannot hover with him upon the confines of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument. He always keeps the path."

The great fault of "The Course of Time" is its elaborate redundancy, the besetting sin, indeed, of the literature of the age. The author's descriptions both of character and of scenery are often overdone. His moral delineations are often admirably given; but in not a few cases they are too general to reach the conscience of the reader; and his denunciations of vice, though unsparing, are too broad and indiscriminate to be of much practical benefit. With all its faults and imperfections, "The Course of Time" is full of the purest poetry, and contains many grand passages, some of which will bear comparison with anything of the kind in British literature. The character of Lord Byron, in particular, was pointed out by Professor Wilson as "a very extraordinary piece of writing." Powerfully conceived, and powerfully expressed, it is every way worthy of its theme; and as "a rough, rapid, masculine, moral sketch, has seldom been equalled."

"Great man! the nations gazed, and wondered much,  
And praised; and many called his evil good.  
Wits wrote in favour of his wickedness;  
And kings to do him honour took delight.  
Thus, fall of titles, flattery, honour, fame,  
Beyond desire, beyond ambition, full,  
He died—he died of what? of wretchedness;  
Drank every cup of joy, heard every trump  
Of fame, drank early, deeply drank, drank draughts  
That common millions might have quenched; then died  
Of thirst, because there was no more to drink.  
His goddess, Nature, wooed, embraced, enjoyed,  
Fell from his arms, abhorred; his passions died;  
Died all but dreary, solitary pride;  
And all his sympathies in being died.  
As some ill-guided bark, well built and tall,  
Which angry tides cast out on desert shores,  
And then retiring, left it there to rot  
And moulder in the winds and rains of heaven;  
So he, out from the sympathies of life,  
And cast ashore from pleasure's boisterous surge,  
A wandering, weary, worn, and wretched thing,  
Scorched, and desolate, and blasted soul,  
A gloomy wilderness of dying thought—  
Repined, and groined, and withered from the earth.  
His groanings filled the land his numbers filled;  
And yet he seemed ashamed to groan. Poor man!  
Ashamed to ask, and yet he needed help.

Proof this, beyond all lingering of doubt,  
That not with natural or mental wealth  
Was God delighted, or his peace secured;  
That not in natural or mental wealth  
Was human happiness or grandeur found.  
Attempt how monstrous, and how surely vain,  
With things of earthly sort, with aught but God,  
With aught but moral excellence, truth, and love,  
To satisfy and fill the immortal soul!  
Attempt, vain inconceivably I attempt,  
To satisfy the Ocean with a drop,  
To marry Immortality to Death,  
And with the unsubstantial Shade of Time,  
To fill the embrace of all Eternity!"

Of the personal allusions with which the work abounds, the author's history of himself, in the third book, affords a striking contrast to the above. His reference to "Scotia's northern battlement of hills," seen from his father's dwelling in "the morn of life," as among the most interesting and beautiful passages; and their interest is heightened when we regard them—which the plan of the poem leads us to do—as the reminiscences of a glorified spirit, looking back from the mansions of bliss with a pensive and tender delight to the experiences of its earthly pilgrimage.

One of this mood I do remember well:  
Woe came him not; what now are earthly names?  
In humble dwelling born, retired, remote;  
In rural quietude, 'mong hills, and streams,  
And melancholy dwells, where the Sun  
Saw, as he passed, a shepherd only, here  
And there, watching his little flock, or heard  
The ploughman talking to his steers; his hopes,  
His morning hopes, awake before him, smiling,  
Among the dews and holy mountain airs;

And fancy coloured them with every hue  
Of heavenly levelness. But soon his dreams  
Of childhood fled away, those rainbow dreams,  
So innocent and fair, that withered Age,  
Even at the grave, cleared up his dusty eye,  
And passing all between, looked fondly back  
To see them once again, ere he departed:  
These fled away, and anxious thought, that wished  
To go, yet whither knew not well to go,  
Possessed his soul, and held it still awhile.  
He listened, and heard from far the voice of fame,  
Heard and was charmed; and deep and sudden vow  
Of resolution made to be renowned;  
And deeper vowed again to keep his vow.  
His parents saw, his parents whom God made  
Of kindest heart, saw, and indulged his hope.  
The ancient page he turned, read much, thought much,  
And with old bards of honourable name  
Measured his soul severely; and looked up  
To fame, ambitious of no second place.  
Hope grew from inward faith, and promised fair.  
And out before him opened many a path  
Ascending, where the laurel highest waved  
Her branch of endless green. He stood admiring;  
But stood, admired, not long. The harp he seized,  
The harp he loved, loved better than his life,  
The harp which uttered deepest notes, and held  
The ear of thought a captive to its song.  
He searched and meditated much, and while,  
With rapturous hand, in secret, touched the lyre,  
Aiming at glorious strains; and searched again  
For themes deserving of immortal verse;  
Chose now, and now refused, unsatisfied;  
Pleased, then displeased, and hesitating still.

Thus stood his mind, when round him came a cloud,  
Slowly and heavily it came, a cloud  
Of ill we mention not: enough to say,  
"Twas gold, and dead, impenetrable gloom.  
He saw its dark approach, and saw his hopes,  
One after one, put out, as nearer still  
It drew his soul; but fainted not at first,  
Fainted not soon. He knew the lot of man  
Was trouble, and prepared to bear the worst;  
Endure what'er should come, without a sigh  
Endure, and drink, even to the very dregs,  
The bitterest cup that Time could measure out;  
And, having done, look up, and ask for more.

Oh! who can tell what days, what nights he spent,  
Of tideless, waveless, sailless, shoreless woe!  
And who can tell how many, glorious ones,  
To others and themselves of promise full,  
Conducted to this pass of human thought,  
This wilderness of intellectual death,  
Wasted and pined, and vanished from the earth,  
Leaving no vestige of memorial there!"

Some of the admirers of "The Course of Time" have not hesitated to claim for it a place beside the time-honoured masterpieces of Dante and Milton; but this is praise "all too high." This much may, however, with truth be conceded, that few, even of our greatest poets, have, at the age of twenty-eight, produced a work which can be placed in competition with it. It is idle to speculate on what Pollok might have achieved had Providence granted him health and "length of days"—had the faults peculiar to a first great attempt been corrected by time and experience. As it is, he has secured to himself a high and lasting place among British poets.

We have only a word to say respecting the "Life" of Pollok. His biographer has very judiciously, whenever it was possible, allowed the poet to speak for himself. The value of the work would have been increased had some of his earlier prose compositions been omitted. A few poems are appended to the volume, as specimens of his juvenile verses. None of them, however, possess much interest, and add nothing to the poet's reputation.

#### RUSSIAN INTERCOURSE WITH CHINA.

RUSSIA, which is separated from China proper by the Tartar territories of the latter empire, is the only nation which is allowed a regular trading intercourse by land. The origin and progress of this connexion may perhaps prove interesting at the present period, when the relations of Great Britain and China are likely to become closer than ever. The jealous, cautious, and exacting character of the Chinese, will be found strongly illustrated in this account, for which we are mainly indebted to the learned orientalist Klaproth. At the commencement of the negotiation, the Russians obtained nearly all they required; but by dint of Chinese diplomacy, the advantages gained at first have gradually dwindled down to a nominal value. The settlement of the boundaries of each territory was, however, a great and permanent good, and had the effect of consolidating the peace of Asia.

The intercourse between Russia and China dates from the commencement of the seventeenth century. It was established when the former power, by its rapid conquests in Siberia, brought under its yoke the countries situated to the south and east of the Baikal lake in Mandchou Tartary. In 1644, the Mandchou Tartars had placed a prince of their own race upon the Chinese throne, and were so fully occupied in forcing the whole empire to submit, and in securing their power, that they made no opposition to the progress of the Russians on their western frontier. Soon after, the empire was menaced on the other side by the Eulent chief, Galdan, who not only preserved his independence, but succeeded in withdrawing the Mongol tribes from their allegiance to the Mandchou emperor. Khang-hi, one of the greatest sovereigns who ever reigned in China, marched against the rebels and killed their chief, in 1697.

The Mandchous, however, had already begun to resist the Russians on the river Amour; and these hostilities continued for a long period, till Count



Golovin concluded at Nertchinsk, in 1689, a convention between Russia and China, which provisionally fixed the frontiers of both the empires.

For a long time after, the friendly relations of both powers remained unbroken, and the Russians established a very active commerce between the Ourga and Pekin. In 1715, Peter I., Emperor of Russia, sent, at the request of Khang-hi, an English surgeon, named Thomas Garwin, to the Chinese capital, accompanied by a Russian lieutenant, named Lange. The latter was instructed to obtain precise information on the subject of Chinese commerce, and on the state of affairs on the frontier. On his return, he reported a number of abuses which resulted from the easy intercourse of the bordering tribes. Upon this, Peter the Great sent a captain of his guards as ambassador to China, to get these evils remedied. This embassy produced the happiest effects, for the Chinese suggested efficacious measures for maintaining the commercial intercourse and a friendly understanding.

After the departure of the Russian ambassador, his companion, Lange, remained in Pekin as the agent of the Russian emperor, to superintend and protect the trading caravans of his subjects. In this year Khang-hi died, and his successor, Young-ting ("perpetual uprightness"), strongly insisted on the definite settlement of the frontiers. Lange was sent back to Russia with the last caravan, and in consequence of the frequent differences which followed, the commerce was completely destroyed. The new emperor, however, showed a disposition for a new treaty, which would have for its object the final settlement of the disputes which existed between the Mongols and the subjects of Russia. To this end the Russians sent another ambassador into China in the year 1726, with orders to settle, at any sacrifice, this long-pending boundary question. On arriving at Pekin, the Russian plenipotentiary was very well received, and the emperor lost no time in forming a commission to accompany him to the frontiers, to settle the line of demarcation. Conformably to this arrangement, both parties met in 1727 near the Boro, a river which runs into the Selengga, about fifteen miles from Kiakta, and therefore marks the frontier between Chinese Tartary and Russia. Here the negotiations commenced between the representatives of the two powers and some distinguished chiefs of the Mongolian tribes. The Chinese put forth the most extravagant demands; they even claimed all the country situated to the south of Baikal. The ambassador, Count Sawa, however, obtained, by his firmness, a renunciation of a great proportion of these demands; and the difficult task of adjusting an immense line of demarcation between the two largest empires in the world was terminated in the most amicable manner.

By an article in the convention, it was decided that, at the point where the frontier touched the river Kiakta, a commercial entrepôt should be established. It was also stipulated, to avoid the likelihood of misunderstanding, that the inhabitants of the frontier should not be allowed to traffic in any other place. Each of the high contracting parties reserved the right of recalling those of its subjects, who, during the settlement of the boundary, had passed it, and established themselves on the other's territory. They were obliged to separate the subjects of both empires which were found living together; the Chinese remaining in Maimatchin, on one side of the Kiakta river, and the Russians in the town of Kiakta, on the other. This treaty was ratified at Pekin on the 21st May, and the commissioners of both empires were ordered to return, to make an actual inspection of the proposed frontier, and to erect signal stones, or border columns, to separate the respective territories. A regular establishment of surveyors, clerks, and workmen, was formed to carry out the last-named order. These border-marks, constructed of stone, are about three feet high. There are two at each station, one on the Russian, the other on the Chinese side, both being inscribed with a number, and the name of the place in which they are situated. The Russian ones are in the form of a cross, and exhibit a written abridgment of their religious creed. The Chinese land-marks are small obelisks, inscribed with the words "place of the frontier."

The important boundary transaction having been settled, a regular commercial intercourse was commenced between the two nations, at the single entrepôt Kiakta. Caravans from various parts of the Russian empire collected in Kiakta at certain seasons of the year, and travelled thence to Pekin. This privilege of trading straight to the capital was exclusively extended to the Russians; but at present the trade is restricted to the frontier depot. That so excellent an opportunity of consolidating the union with China by other means might not be lost, the Russian mission succeeded in establishing in Pekin a Russian institution, partly religious, partly scientific. But this establishment failed, through the unconquerable jealousy of the Chinese for foreign people, be they ever so few. The inmates of the institution, therefore, are doomed to a gloomy and reclusive existence. They consist of six ecclesiastical, and four lay members, with their pupils, the whole of whom shall, it is stipulated, be changed for other inmates every ten years. One of the objects of the institution is, to teach Russians the Chinese language. But altogether, the college is of no other value to the Russians than a means of keeping a footing in the Chinese capital. At its first establishment, a profusion of promises was made by the emperor to support the Russian establish-

ment; but he has gradually narrowed his patronage, until that has become almost nominal, while the restrictions imposed upon the inmates have as gradually increased.

It would thus appear, that with whatever friendship the Chinese may seem, when driven to concession; to regard foreigners, their dislike of them is invincible. This aversion forms a portion of their social and political constitution. Hatred of strangers is considered a virtue, and one which is assiduously inculcated in the minds of the young: it guides their political counsels and their private conduct. They make treaties to avoid war. It is then their whole study to render those treaties abortive. The only really successful negotiation of any importance the Chinese ever made with a foreign power, is the settlement of the Russian frontier, which, besides being a real benefit to both countries, served to withdraw the attention of the northern autocrat from designs of a more formidable nature; and which, in the disorganisation caused in China by the Tartar conquest, might have dismembered the largest and most ancient empire in the world.

#### A CANADIAN SCENE.

On a raw Sabbath morning, after a night of heavy rain, in the month of August, we were assembled round the breakfast-table in our log-cabin, when the sound of a horse's hoofs, followed by a smart rap on the door, announced a visitor. It was Mr Reid, who informed us that his child, which had been missing on the plains the night before, was not yet found, and begging of us, as we were near the ground, to turn out and assist in the search.

What are called plains in Canada are ranges of high ground, which stretch through the country, usually parallel to some lake or river, and extend in breadth from two or three to twenty or thirty miles. The soil is sandy, and except near a stream, thinly wooded; while the ground is covered with swarth, intermixed with the most brilliant wild flowers, and occasional beds of blueberries and wild strawberries; thickets of brush, frequently interspersed, rendering it difficult for a stranger to keep his course.

It is usual to make pic-nics to these fruit-gardens, and several of our number had been there the day before. On their return, they mentioned Mr Reid searching for his child, but we had no apprehensions for its safety. Some immediately started for the appointed rendezvous, while those who were left behind to look after the cattle were not slow in following. Scarcely had we reached the foot of the ridge, which was about a quarter of a mile from our house, when a severe thunder storm commenced, accompanied by heavy rain; and as we entered the forest, the roar of the storm, with the crash of falling trees, had a most awful effect. We thought of the terrors which must be felt by the poor lost one, and fervently wished it might be in some place of safety. Holding on our way, the smoke of a large fire soon brought us to head-quarters, where we found a number of people assembled, going about without any sort of organisation. The father had gone to seek some rest, after wandering the woods all night, calling on the name of his child, for they had got a notion that any noise or unknown voice would alarm the child, and cause her to hide.

Inquiry was now made for those who lived near and were best acquainted with the woods, and all of us were assigned different portions to search. My course lay through a dense cedar swamp, in the rear of our clearing. I wandered alone until towards evening, and never did I spend a Sabbath whose impressions were more solemn. My footsteps fell noiselessly on the deep moss, beneath which I could frequently hear the trickling streams, while the thunder roared above, and the hoary trunks of the gray cedars reflected the lightning's flash, or, shivered by its fury, fell crashing to the ground. After wandering for some time without success, I took shelter from the rain in a ruined log-house, which, by the remains of a rail fence, showed that a small clearing around had been once rescued from the forest; but the gloomy desolation of the scene seemed to have driven its possessor to seek a habitation nearer the society of men. We met at even without success, but, on comparing notes, were not disheartened, as we had yet searched only the outskirts of the plains; the object of our search, we fancied, might have wandered deeper into the woods; but then came the awful reflection, that they abounded with wolves and bears, which often alarmed the settlers themselves; and stories were not wanting to render her situation more alarming. We were now, however, compelled to return, leaving a party to keep a look-out, and continue the fire. Next morning, the news having spread over the country, our number was increased to about two hundred. So great seemed the anxiety, that the store-keeper had left his store, as well as the farmer his hay unranked. All seemed to think only of the lost child. We first formed parties of ten or twelve, and ranged in different directions; then long lines were formed, each so near his neighbour, as to command the ground between. The Indians, belonging to a village eight or ten miles off, were sent for; every effort was used. Stretching far into the heart of the forests, not a bush was left, not a log unexamined. But again we returned without success. Some of our number were again left, thinking that in the stillness of the night they might hear the cries of the child and, wandering about, might thus discover it.

This morning was fine, and our number seemed increased to three or four hundred. Twelve or fourteen Indians were also there, on whom much dependence was placed. They, however, and with reason, would not search where we came. We again entered the forest, and traversed some of the heavily wooded parts. The scene was in many parts magnificent; and advancing in a straight line, we were led into many spots where human feet but rarely trod. The deer and foxes rushed affrighted from their lairs, and the sporting propensities of many of our friends were hardly restrained by fear of alarming the child. We began now to get disheartened, and instead of a steady search, often scattered ourselves over the beds of blueberries, or feasted on strawberries, which were frequently scattered in rich clusters along the ground. The wild flowers, too, in the thinner woods, were most brilliant; many of them are bright scarlet, and from the calmness of the atmosphere, their colour attains to great perfection. The joyous news was now spread that the Indians had found tracks; but on examining the spot, I felt certain they were my own footsteps around the old log-house; the ground being soft, they had contracted, so as to appear like a child's. These Indians fell far short of the intelligence with which they are usually painted. They were sullen and taciturn, not, seemingly, from a want of desire to converse, but rather, as I imagine, from sheer stupidity. The Indians having failed in following out the tracks, we were again thrown on our own resources, and leaving a watch, returned home.

This morning a large number again assembled, many from a considerable distance. But the search seemed carried on with less energy as the prospect of success diminished; the day was spent in traversing the woods in long ranks, but many seemed careless; and though the finding of a saucer which the child had carried seemed to revive hope, we parted at night fully persuaded that we should never find her alive.

Mr Reid had now been out with us every day, and looked fatigued both in body and mind. This morning, on meeting in an altogether new quarter, he told us he had now no hope of finding his child alive, but it would be some satisfaction to ascertain her fate; and if we would use our utmost endeavour this day, he dare hardly ask to trespass further on our time.

We now started with a determined energy, and beat round for some hours. At length we mustered the whole party to go back four or five miles to a burn, beyond which we imagined she would not wander; every thicket was examined, and many places seen which had been missed before. It was beautiful to see the deer bound harmless along our track, as the old hunters raised their sticks, wishing they had been rifles; yet we reached the hill overhanging the burn without success. Here we at once stretched ourselves on the sunny bank, and soon stripped the blueberries of their black fruit. The younger part of us raked about the banks of the burn, while the elders lay down to rest, satisfied that our fruitless labour was now done. When the sun began to decline, we all started homewards, like the company breaking up from some country race-course. Many used praiseworthy endeavours to bring us to order, but in vain. Sometimes we formed line; again it was broken by a startled deer or a covey of pheasants; after which numbers bounded, shouting and yelling with unseasonable merriment. Some trudged along, deep in conversation; while others, in short sleeves, overcome by heat, seated themselves on a log, or, leaning on their companions, jogged lazily along. At length we descended into a hollow thicket, in whose cool shade we again recovered a sort of line. Scarcely had we begun to ascend the opposite hill, when a faint cheer was heard; immediately the woods re-echoed the response of our whole line, and we rushed onward, heedless of every impediment, until we reached a large clearing, amidst which stood an empty frame of a house; and approaching it, there was Mr Reid, with his child in his arms. I will not attempt to describe his joy; we all crowded round to get one glimpse, and then returned to our homes, elated with our success. After being in the woods from Saturday morning until Thursday evening, the child was found by a party of two or three who had straggled from the rest. They saw her standing on a log, and her first question to one of them who advanced was, "Do you know where Mr Reid lives?" What had been the sufferings of the little creature for three days and two nights in the open forest, may be left to the imagination of the reader.

#### THE CLUB HOUSES.

On these elegant places of resort in the western part of the metropolis, the following observations are made in a late number of the *Courier de l'Europe*, by the Viscountess de Malleville:—

"It cannot be denied that these assemblages, wealthy and widely extended in their ramifications, selfish in principle, but perfectly adapted to the habits of the nation, offer valuable advantages to those who have the good fortune to be enrolled in them. The social state and manners of the country gave the first idea of them. The spirit of association, which is so inherent in the British character, did the rest. It is only within the precincts of these opulent edifices, where all the requirements of opulent life, all the comforts and luxuries of princely habitations are combined, that we can adequately appreciate the advantages and the complicated results produced by such a system of association.



For an annual subscription, comparatively of small amount, every member of a club is admitted into a circle, which is enlivened and renewed from time to time by the accession of strangers of distinction. A well-selected and extensive library, newspapers and pamphlets from all parts of the world, assist him to pass the hours of leisure and digestion. According as his tastes incline, a man may amuse himself in the saloons devoted to play, to reading, or to conversation. In a word, the happy man, who only goes to get his dinner, may drink the best wines out of the finest cut glass, and may eat the daintiest and best cooked viands off the most costly plate, at such moderate prices, as no Parisian restaurateur could afford. The advantages of a club do not end here: it becomes for each of its members a second domestic hearth, where the cares of business and household annoyances cannot assail him. As a retreat especially sacred against the visitations of idle acquaintances and tiresome creditors—a sanctuary in which each member feels himself in the society of those who act and sympathise with him—the club will ever remain a resort, tranquil, elegant, and exclusive; interdicted to the humble and to the insignificant.

Amongst the numerous establishments of this nature which exist in London, there is one which surpasses all the others in extent and magnificence. We need hardly say we allude to the 'Reform Club.' Built after the design of Mr Barry, an elegant and correct architect, whom Providence owed to England to atone for the monstrosities of Messrs Nash and Company, the edifice, in its exterior, is erected upon simple and severe principles, which exclude neither the idea of grandeur in the ensemble, nor of elegance in the details. The interior arrangements are remarkably well adapted to the general objects and individual wants of the club, and show that the architect is a man of taste, and intimately acquainted with practical details. Unlike in most English buildings, the staircase is wide and commodious, and calls to mind that of the Louvre. The quadrangular apartment which terminates it, is surrounded by spacious galleries—the rich mosaic pavement, in which the brilliancy of the colour is only surpassed by the variety of the design—the cut-glass ceiling, supported by four rows of marble pillars—all these things call to remembrance the most magnificent apartments of Versailles in the days of the great king and his splendours. This is the vestibule. Close by is the dining-room, a long and wide gallery, richly but chastely decorated with panels of the finest woods, before which are extended ranges of tables covered with plate, and table-cloths of the most dazzling whiteness. Then there are the rooms devoted to play, to conversation, to reading, and the private apartments. On every side you behold pictures, marble, and silks; under your feet are magnificent carpets; before you are rich hangings, draperies, and cut glass—the whole arranged with elegance and fine taste, the only omission (unfortunately too frequent) being bronzes, which do not figure among these rich and varied decorations.

We now quit the upper regions, and follow Mr Scott, the secretary of the club, and the politest and most obliging Cicerone in the world. Theatrically speaking, we have as yet only seen the stage and its sumptuous decorations from the boxes and the pit; we now go behind the scenes, among the scene-shifters and the machinists. But unlike in a theatre, we see no naked walls behind the scenes—no tattered draperies—no floors strewn with sawdust. This fine apartment is the kitchen—spacious as a ball-room, kept in the finest order, and white as a young bride. All-powerful steam, the noise of which salutes your ear as you enter, here performs a variety of offices: it diffuses a uniform heat to large rows of dishes, warms the metal plates upon which are disposed the dishes that have been called for, and that are in waiting to be sent above; it turns the spits, draws the water, carries up the coal, and moves the plate like an intelligent and indefatigable servant. Stay a while before this octagonal apparatus, which occupies the centre of the place. Around you the water boils and the stew-pans bubble, and a little further on is a moveable furnace, before which pieces of meat are converted into savoury roasts; here are sauces and gravies, stews, broths, soups, &c. In the distance are Dutch ovens, marble mortars, lighted stoves, ice plates of metal for fish, and various compartments for vegetables, fruits, roots, and spices. After this inadequate, though prodigious nomenclature, the reader may perhaps picture to himself a state of general confusion, a disordered assemblage, resembling that of a heap of oyster-shells. If so, he is mistaken; for, in fact, you see very little, or scarcely anything of all the objects above-described. The order of their arrangement is so perfect, their distribution as a whole, and in their relative bearings to one another, all are so intelligently considered, that you require the aid of a guide to direct you in exploring them, and a good deal of time to classify in your mind all your discoveries.

The man who devised the plan of this magnificent kitchen, over which he rules and governs without question or dispute; the *artiste* who directs by his gestures his subalterns tricked out in white, and whose eye takes in at a glance the most difficult combinations in the culinary art; in a word, the *chef* by whom every *gourmet* admitted within the precincts of the Reform Club swears, is M. Soyer, of whom it may justly be said, that he is not more distinguished as a professor of the science of the Vatel and Caraman, than as a well-behaved and modest man. Allow him, therefore, to give you the history of his discoveries and improvements; let him conduct you into the smallest recesses of his establishment, the cleanliness of which would shame many a drawing-room; and listen to him, also, as he informs you that those precious pictures which crowd his own parlour are from the pencil of a wife who has recently been taken from him by a premature death. Of this you might almost doubt till he again affirms it; for, judging from the poetry of the composition, and the vigour of the colouring, and the design, you might swear that these pictures were the work of Murillo when he was young.

Let all strangers who come to London for business, or pleasure, or curiosity, or for whatever cause, not fall to

visit the Reform Club. In an age of utilitarianism, and of the search for the comfortable, like ours, there is more to be learned here than in the ruins of the Coliseum, of the Parthenon, or of Memphis."

#### THE HORSE ABATOIRS OF PARIS.

Few things are more productive of melancholy than the condition and fate of horses in the latter days of their career. No matter how useful they may have been, what years of toil they may have endured, we find them at last dismissed without regret, and sold for a few shillings, or what their mere skin, flesh, bones, and other parts, are worth. Thus, in London, and also in Paris, there are large establishments forming the abatoirs of horses—places, of course, whence all sentiments of pity are banished, and where the once sleek and beloved animals are deprived of existence, in the midst of scenes which reflect little credit on humanity.

Few have any idea of the vast extent of the horse abatoirs at Montfaucon, in Paris. To this place all horses past service are conducted. Worn usually to skin and bone, they come in strings of twelve or twenty, are huddled into a stable where they cannot stir, or are left in the open air, tied to the carcasses of those that have just met their fate. A great number of horses, living and dead, are brought to Montfaucon annually; the winter season, when the poor cannot keep them, being most productive in this respect. By a calculation made for 1827, it was found that thirty-five came to the slaughter-house daily, making a yearly whole of 12,785. Three-fourths of them came in life. As, in the same year, the total number of horses in Paris amounted to about 20,500, not less than five-eighths seem thus to perish annually. A deduction must be made, however, for the horses bought in the districts around the city. In any case, the number of victims is immense.

Four different methods are used at Montfaucon for killing the horses. One is by injecting air into an opened vein, a tedious and little used, though cleanly process; a second is by piercing the spinal marrow in the neck; a third way is to fell the animal on the head, as is done with oxen; and a fourth method, that commonly practised, is to stab the animal in the chest. One melancholy sight follows the deaths of two or three horses. The stoutest of the victims, next to fall, is made to draw the newly slain bodies to the scene of the ulterior operations.

The hair of the mane and tail is removed before death, but the wretched hacks have usually lost or been stripped of these appendages before coming to Montfaucon. When accumulated in quantities, the hair is sold to saddlers and chairmakers. The skins of the horses no use is made, though men of science have recommended its employment in the manufacture of Prussian blue, for which purpose ox blood is in great demand. The flesh is the next point. In 1739, an ordinance was revived, interdicting its sale in Paris as human food. During the times of the revolutionary scarcity, however, horse-flesh was largely used in the capital, and many, who took no other animal food for six months, felt not the slightest injury from it. The open use of it did not cease till 1803. In 1811, a time of scarcity, many butchers were caught making market of it; and soon afterwards, the medical men having declared the flesh of a sound horse wholesome, a permission was given to sell it openly, but only in given places. Withdrawn in 1814, this permission was renewed in 1816, and still holds good. In feeding animals, and as manure, a large portion of the Montfaucon horse carcasses is acknowledgedly employed; but it is also believed that no small quantity is sold to the poor, without their own knowledge. As for the numerous workmen at Montfaucon, they live on nothing else, and they thrive upon it. It perhaps strengthens their nerves for their disagreeable business, as it spirited up our early ancestors of the north to their human butcheries. The use of it among these latter nations only ceased on their conversion to Christianity, as is proved by existing papal bulls. However, Denmark has latterly returned to its old habits, being the first European nation that has authorised the open sale of horse-flesh among the ordinary contents of the shambles. A traveller relates, also, that he tasted some excellent smoked horse, on dining with the Tartarian Khan, Krim-Guerai. Baron Larrey, moreover, tells us that the French army, in various campaigns, were not only sustained well by such food, but were even seemingly cured, by its healthiness, of scorbutic disease.

From different parts of the animals killed at Montfaucon, glue, oil, and other marketable commodities are produced, and the shoes meet with a ready sale to cutlers and others. In short, nothing is lost; for it is even a trade to gather the larvae as food for fowls; and thus the elegant animals which once pranced proudly in the Champs de Mars, and at the gay fêtes of the French metropolis, are unscrupulously consigned to the shambles of Montfaucon, and put to the basest of purposes.

#### BEGINNING OF THE YEAR IN VARIOUS NATIONS.

The Chaldeans' and Egyptians' years were dated from the autumnal equinox. The ecclesiastical year of the Jews began in the spring; but in civil affairs they retain the epoch of the Egyptian year. The ancient Chinese reckoned from the new moon nearest the middle of Aquarius. The year of Romulus commenced in March, and that of Numa in January. The Turks and Arabs date the year from the 16th of July. Dromschid, or Genshid, king of Persia, observed, on the day of his public entry into Persepolis, that the sun entered into Aries; and in commemoration of this fortunate event, he ordained the beginning of the year to be removed from the autumnal to the vernal equinox. The Brachman begin their year with the new moon in April. The Mexicans begin it in February, when the leaves begin to grow green. Their year consists of eighteen months, having twenty days each; the last five days are spent in mirth, and no business is suffered to be done, nor even any service at the

temples. The Abyssinians have five idle days at the end of their year, which commences on the 25th of August. The American Indians reckon from the first appearance of the new moon at the vernal equinox. The Mahomedans begin their year the minute in which the sun enters Aries. The Venetians, Florentines, and the Pisans in Italy, began the year at the vernal equinox. The French year, during the reign of the Merovingian race, began on the day on which the troops were reviewed, which was the first day of March. Under the Carolingians it began on Christmas-day, and under the Capetians on Easter-day. The ecclesiastical year begins on the first Sunday in Advent. Charles IX. appointed, in 1564, that for the future the civil year should commence on the first of January. The Julian calendar, which was so called from Julius Caesar, and is the old account of the year, was reformed by Pope Gregory in 1582, which plan was suggested by Lewis Lilio, a Calabrian astronomer. The Dutch and the Protestants in Germany introduced the new style in 1700. The ancient clergy reckoned from the 25th of March; and the method was observed in Britain until the introduction of the new style, A. D. 1752; after which our year commenced on the first of January. —*Newspaper paragraph.*

#### INGENUITY OF BIRDS.

Thrushes feed very much on snails, looking for them in mossy banks. Having frequently observed some broken snail-shells near two projecting pebbles on a gravel walk, which had a hollow between them, I endeavoured to discover the occasion of their being brought to that situation. At last I saw a thrush fly to the spot with a snail-shell in his mouth, which he placed between the two stones, and hammered at it with his beak till he had broken it, and was then able to feed on its contents. The bird must have discovered that he could not apply his beak with sufficient force to break the shell while it was rolling about, and he therefore found out and made use of a spot which would keep the shell in one position. When the lapping wants to procure food, it seeks for a worm's cast, and stamps the ground by the side of it with its feet; somewhat in the same manner as I have often done when a boy, in order to procure worms for fishing. After doing this for a short time, the bird waits for the issue of the worm from its hole, who, alarmed at the shaking of the ground, endeavours to make its escape, when he is immediately seized, and becomes the prey of the ingenious bird. The lapping also frequents the haunts of moles. These animals, when in pursuit of worms, on which they feed, frighten them, and the worm, in attempting to escape, comes to the surface of the ground, where it is seized by the lapping. The same mode of alarming his prey has been related of the gull.—*Jesse's Gleanings in Natural History.*

#### IVISON'S PATENT FOR PREVENTING SMOKE.

In our notice of various plans for the prevention of smoke (No. 576, Feb. 11), it appears we have not done justice to the process of Mr Ivison, which we described as apparently imperfect, in consequence of large volumes of black smoke being frequently seen at the Silk Factory, Edinburgh, where, we understood, it was professedly applied. We now learn that, for twelve months past, the use of the patent has been withdrawn by the patentees from the above factory, and hence the volumes of smoke which had fallen under our notice. Such being the case, of course the patent in question must rest on its own merits, free of any disparagement from us. We are further assured by Mr William Bell, 11 Queen Street, Edinburgh, agent for the patentees, that the liability of derangement from the action of the furnace on the fan-like injector of steam, will not occur where the principle is properly applied, and that six of them were used at the factory, in six furnaces, with little or no repair, for two years. A paper has been handed to us by the proprietors of Ivison's patent, showing, upon affidavit, the comparative results as to smoke, in working with five furnaces, at the factory, before and after the withdrawal of the patent. We have not space to go into minute details, but quote only the following particulars. "In seven days, comprising 2130 minutes of working time, there was, with the patent, only 4 minutes of dense smoke, 30 minutes of half dense smoke, 70 minutes when smoke was scarcely visible, and 2026 minutes when there was no smoke. In four days, comprising 1230 minutes of working time, there was, without the patent, 507 minutes of dense smoke, 540 minutes of half dense smoke, 183 minutes of smoke scarcely visible, and now in which there was no smoke." For the information of unskilled persons, it should be explained why smoke appears at some times and not at others, even with the patent. The occurrence of smoke is during the brief intervals when fresh fuel is applied, at which times the doors of the furnace are necessarily opened, and the influence of the patent partially deranged by the great rush of air across the furnace. Much of the smoke, however, at these feeding times might be saved, were the stokers as active and careful as they should be. Mr Bell has also brought under our notice the advantages of Ivison's patent as respects saving of fuel—a point of vast importance where large engines are employed, or where coal is expensive; but we must refer to the printed account of the patentees, and to a recent essay for the Society of Arts, by our townsman Dr Fyfe, for all required details on this branch of the subject.

In our previous notice, we took occasion to observe that we had employed Ivison's patent in the modified form of injecting the steam *beneath* instead of above the fire, and, as appears to us, with equal advantage, no smoke being observable from the chimney, except at the moment of applying fuel. As this or some other of the many plans for preventing smoke can be applied at an exceedingly small cost, and often along with plans for saving fuel, it cannot but appear surprising that owners of engine furnaces should refrain from their use, and that the smoke-nuisance should till this day exist.

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